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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 002122

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/18/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [ENRG](#) [EINV](#) [EMIN](#) [ETRD](#) [PGOV](#) [CG](#) [CH](#) [KN](#)
SUBJECT: DRC VISIT TO CHINA, N. KOREA - HYDROELECTRICITY
AND ROOF TILES MAJOR PROSPECTS

REF: REFTEL: KINSHASA 1958

Classified By: PolCouns MSanderson, reasons 1.4 b/d.

11. (C) Summary: Presidential advisor Andre Kapanga, the second-ranking official on the DRC delegation to China and North Korea, told PolCouns November 17 that meetings focused on investment opportunities in the DRC, particularly hydroelectrical generation and production of roof tiles. China offered the DRC a \$3 million line-of-credit, in addition to \$1.5m to purchase office supplies for the Congolese Foreign Ministry. A second visit to China is planned in March or April, although Kapanga said he didn't think the Congolese would go back to North Korea, given that the Koreans are "even worse off" than the Congolese. Kapanga said that although the Congolese delegation met in both countries with military elements there was no discussion of trade in minerals, nor will Congo be receiving military assistance from either China or North Korea. End Summary.

12. (C) A six-person Congolese delegation led by Foreign Minister Ramazani Baya and Presidential advisor Andre Kapanga visited China and North Korea at Chinese and Korean expense November 3-13. In China the Congolese visited Beijing, Shanghai and Chenji (a free trade zone on the mainland across from Hong Kong); in North Korea they were limited to the capital city. According to Kapanga, the Congolese delegation made clear the DRC's interest in attracting investment, particularly for assembly operations which could employ unskilled Congolese labor.

Chinese Offer Line of Credit

13. (C) Kapanga said that during a meeting with the Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister, the Chinese government offered the DRC a \$3 million line-of-credit which the DRC can use for purchasing Chinese goods or equipment. In addition, China will give the DRC \$1.5m worth of office supplies and equipment to support the Congolese Foreign Ministry's operations, and up to 20,000 military uniforms. Kapanga seemed puzzled himself as to what good 20,000 uniforms would be for a military current numbering roughly 300,000 soldiers, but said that the DRC had accepted the offer. (Note: China has a history of assisting the DRC Foreign Ministry, and China also built the Congolese Parliament in the 1970's. End Note.) Kapanga said that although the Congolese delegation did have a "courtesy meeting" with some Chinese military officials, no military training or assistance was offered nor sought, and there was no discussion with the Chinese of exploiting Congo's uranium, coltran or other mineral deposits. Instead, China noted that possibility of building micro-dams to provide electricity to underserved areas of the Congo, using either hydro or thermo technology, as appropriate. While enthusiastic over this prospect, Kapanga wryly noted that financing these projects, which the Chinese initially estimated at about \$50 million, would be a challenge.

North Korea Could Produce Roofing Tiles

14. (C) Kapanga emphasized how struck he was with the regimentation of North Korea (his driver, for instance, never spoke to him nor looked directly at him during the entire three-day stay, although he did quickly pocket the \$50 gratuity that Kapanga offered). He spoke with some resentment of being forced to visit Kim's tomb, and of the delegation's being shown on Korean television bowing to the well-preserved icon. He noted, with revulsion, that all the officials repeated constantly the "party line" extolling the brilliance of Kim and all their leaders, and virtually refused to engage in any real conversation. He said the poverty and malnutrition visible on the trip into the city from the airport was in shocking contrast to the opulent marble palaces in which the government officials conducted business, and said the entire Congolese delegation was appalled by this contrast. Although they met with two firms interested in producing roofing tiles in the Congo, Kapanga said he didn't think this would likely bear fruit, since neither North Korea nor the Congo has the financing necessary to found such a business. Again, the Congolese met with a military delegation, but Kapanga said that there was no offer of military assistance, and particularly there was no discussion of accessing the DRC's uranium at Shinkolobwe mine in Katanga.

15. (C) Kapanga said that the Congolese likely will return to China for a second visit in March or April 2005 to explore more concrete ideas related to the line-of-credit offered by China, but stated categorically that they would not be going back to North Korea.

Comment

16. (C) Visiting China at least has some logic, given that the Chinese do have financial capacity, political and economic links to the DRC, and a number of Chinese businessmen currently in the Congo, particularly in Katanga and Oriental Provinces. However, North Korea remains a stretch and leaves us thinking, if not of uranium -- and we don't doubt Kapanga when he says the delegation didn't discuss uranium sales with the North Koreas -- at least of conventional arms. The DRC could be seeking to upgrade its armaments to better defend itself -- although better arms in the hands of untrained and incompetent military is more frightening than effective. In any event, there are things which just don't ring true about this visit; for instance, another Presidential advisor told the Ambassador that President Kabilia had not been fully informed about this trip in advance, and hadn't even known that Kapanga would be going along. We will try to get the Foreign Minister's perspective on the trip when he returns to the DRC from his current travels in early December.

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